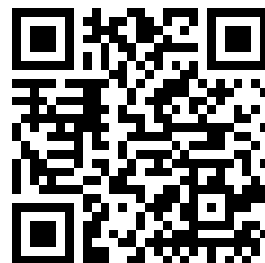

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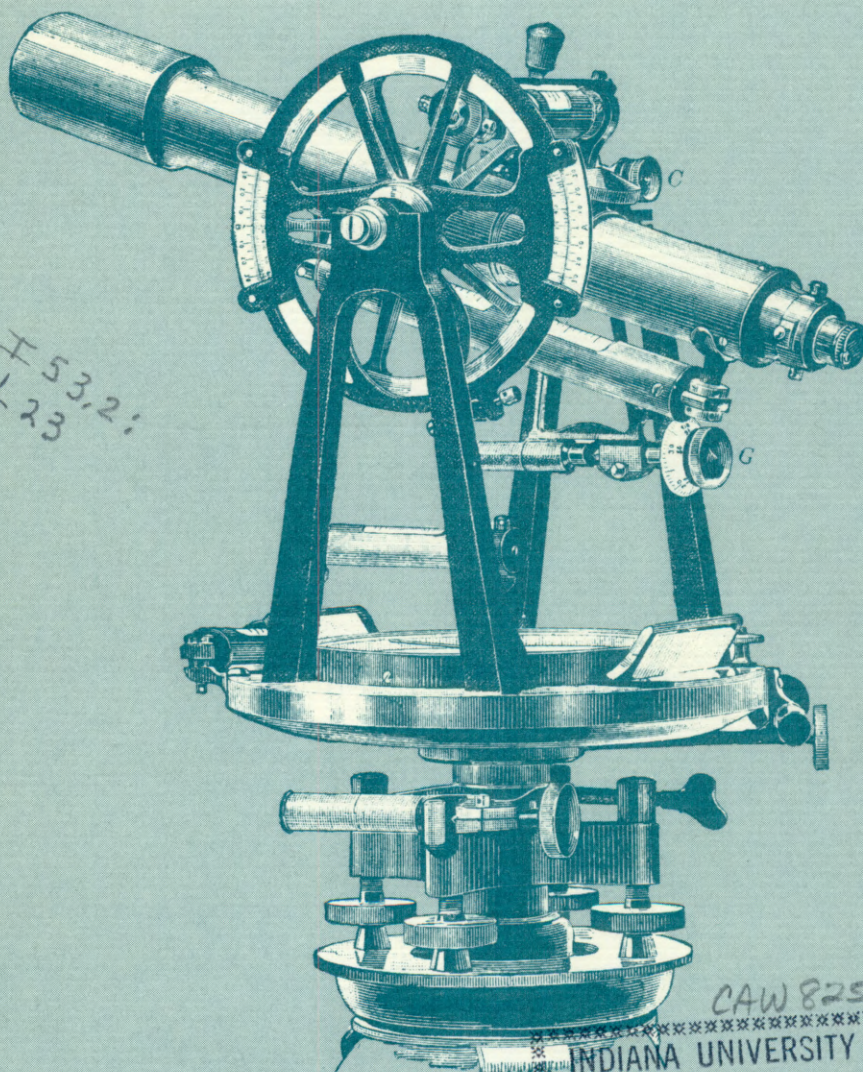
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LANDMARKS

in Public Land Management



United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

October 1962

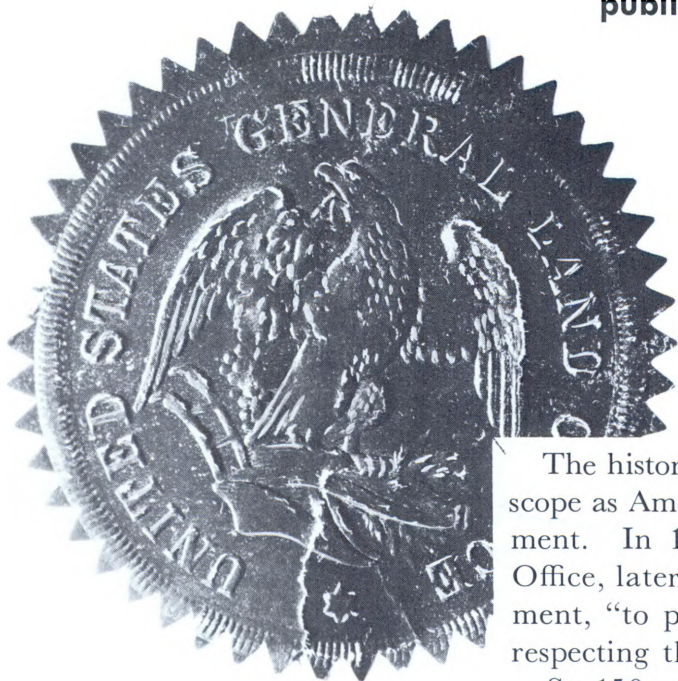
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Stewart L. Udall, *Secretary*

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Karl S. Landstrom, *Director*

LANDMARKS

in Public Land Management

Issued on the sesquicentennial of the founding of the first Federal system of public land management.



The history of the General Land Office is as broad in scope as America's history of land and resource development. In 1812 Congress charged the General Land Office, later to become the Bureau of Land Management, "to perform all actions and things touching or respecting the public lands of the United States . . ."

So 150 years ago the first Federal system of public land management was founded. Throughout history, lands from America's public domain have furnished both natural resources and real property for the settlement and development of a great Nation.

The public lands, under the stewardship of the General Land Office, now the Bureau of Land Management of the United States Department of the Interior, have built the foundation for a great system of railroads, have provided lands for schools and colleges, and have helped to build America's farms. The public domain formed the bulk of the great national parks and forests. Today the national land reserve—the public domain reserved under the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934—promises a priceless heritage of use and enjoyment for the generations of tomorrow.

Days of the Continental Congress

Closely allied with the early settlement and subsequent development of the United States were the lands of the public domain: the origin of our present national land reserve. And the history of the public domain is much of the history of a growing Nation of potential greatness.

The origin of the public domain was a series of random events that took place during the two decades beginning in 1781.

In the first hectic days of freedom for the young and lusty Republic, members of the Continental Congress put down the first foundations for future expansion.

Then heavily in debt, the new Nation had something of a victory hangover. There was ambition to grow and expand, but also concern about taking the right steps toward such greatness.

Problems, and a Solution

Weighing heavily on members of the Continental Congress were two national problems: the restlessness of the people, and rejuvenation of the depleted National Treasury.

More and more immigrants arrived almost daily, seeking a new life in a new country. Many veterans of the Revolutionary War dreamed moodily about the western wilderness. Even the most stalwart citizens had occasional, wistful touches of wanderlust.

For these two problems, the Congress developed a joint solution.

With a little legislative persuasion, some of the original States having claims to territory west of the Appalachians agreed to cede most of these lands to the new Government.

Collectively this became the 237 million acre nucleus of the original public domain, and included almost all of the unsettled wilderness north of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi Rivers.

Ohio River

Township No. 5, First Range

Sections 3, 7, 8, 9, 10

Scale: 0 to 24 miles

Scale of Feet: 0 to 2400

Surveyed in 1786 by

Abraham Markon from New Jersey

This Ordinance introduced the rectangular system of land surveys. Under this system, a land area was divided into townships, each ordinarily six miles square. Every township was symmetrically divided into 36 sections. And each section ordinarily consisted of 640 acres. The Ordinance of 1785 also devised a method of selling these public lands. After survey, large tracts were sold by the Board of Treasury at Federal offices then located in New York City.

First systems of survey and disposition

Pattern for National Expansion

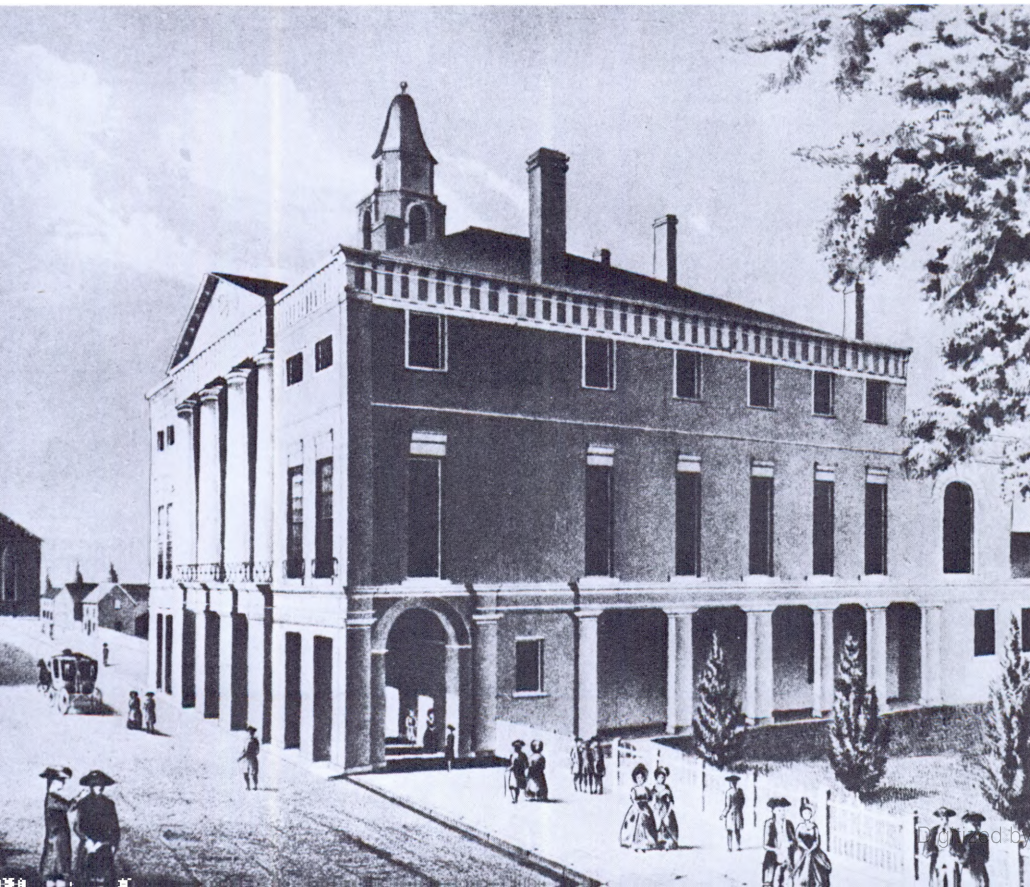
The first tracts of public lands were sold in 1787 at office of Board of Treasury, Federal Building, lower New York City.

The two systems inaugurated by the Ordinances of 1785 and 1787 were subsequently used, as the Nation expanded, to extend the same standardized pattern of the public domain throughout most of the new territories of the United States.

All surveys, records, and sales of public lands came under jurisdiction of the Board of Treasury, mainly because it was the only branch of the new Government authorized to handle money. And one of the chief reasons for selling public lands at this time was to enhance the National Treasury.

But there was no centralized control of surveys and land transactions, and all planning and management was assumed by the Congress.

By 1789, the crowded one-room office in lower New York City was sorely inadequate to handle the increasing work of the Board of Treasury—which later that year became the Treasury Department. Even when the new Department moved to larger quarters in Philadelphia in 1790, there was only small relief—duly noted by Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury.



The United States of America,

To ALL to whom these presents shall come Greeting:

Germ of an original idea

As more public lands north of the Ohio River were surveyed, there was a continuing increase in land transactions required of the Treasury Department.

Conceding the need for a centralized agency dedicated solely to administration of the public lands, Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, made a significant recommendation to the Congress in 1790.

Hamilton proposed the creation of a new Federal organization, which he called a General Land Office, to supervise surveys and land sales, maintain records, and issue patents or deeds. The national office was to be supported by offices in the field near the public lands being offered for sale.

At the time, his proposal received only cursory attention from Congress. But as history was to prove, Alexander Hamilton conceived the basic idea of a General Land Office and an improved system of Federal land management. Two decades later, in almost identical detail, his proposal was enacted into law.

K NOW YE, That for the consideration of *Six hundred and forty* Dollars, we have granted, and hereby do Grant and confirm unto *John Martin* the Lot numbered *Twenty* in the Township, numbered *Seven* in the Range *Fourth* excepting and reserving one third Part of all Gold, Silver, Lead and Copper Mines within the same, for future Sale or Disposition: To have to the said *John Martin* his Heirs and Assigns for ever.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, We, the Commissioners of the Board of Treasury,

have, in conformity to an Act of Congress of the said United States, of the Twenty-first day of April, in the Year of our Lord, one Thousand Seven

Hundred and Eighty-seven, hereunto set our Hands and affixed the Seal of

the Treasury, this *Fourth* day of *March*

in the Year of our Lord, One Thousand Seven Hundred and *Eighty*

Eight and of the Independence of the United States of America *the Twelfth*

(signed, *Samuel B. Good,*
Walter Livingston)

The first patent was issued to John Martin for a tract of public land in Ohio by the Board of the Treasury, New York City, March 4, 1788.



As Secretary of the Treasury in 1790, Alexander Hamilton proposed creation of a General Land Office to administer all public land sales and records.

The great migration westward

After selling thousands of acres of public lands in the Northwest Territory, mostly in large blocks to land speculators, the Treasury Department opened the first local land offices in Ohio at Steubenville and Marietta in 1800—for sales of small tracts to itinerant settlers.

This was the start of the great migration toward the West that was to affect the settlement and development of most of the United States. From the East came the pioneers, settlers, and adventurers—the restless, hopeful, spirited, and often moneyless. Crossing the Alleghenies, they moved down the Ohio Valley—on foot, on horseback, but usually aboard canvas-covered wagons loaded with everything they owned. And the object of their migratory search: new and fertile acreage for farming, and an opportunity to start their lives anew on the frontier of a new America.

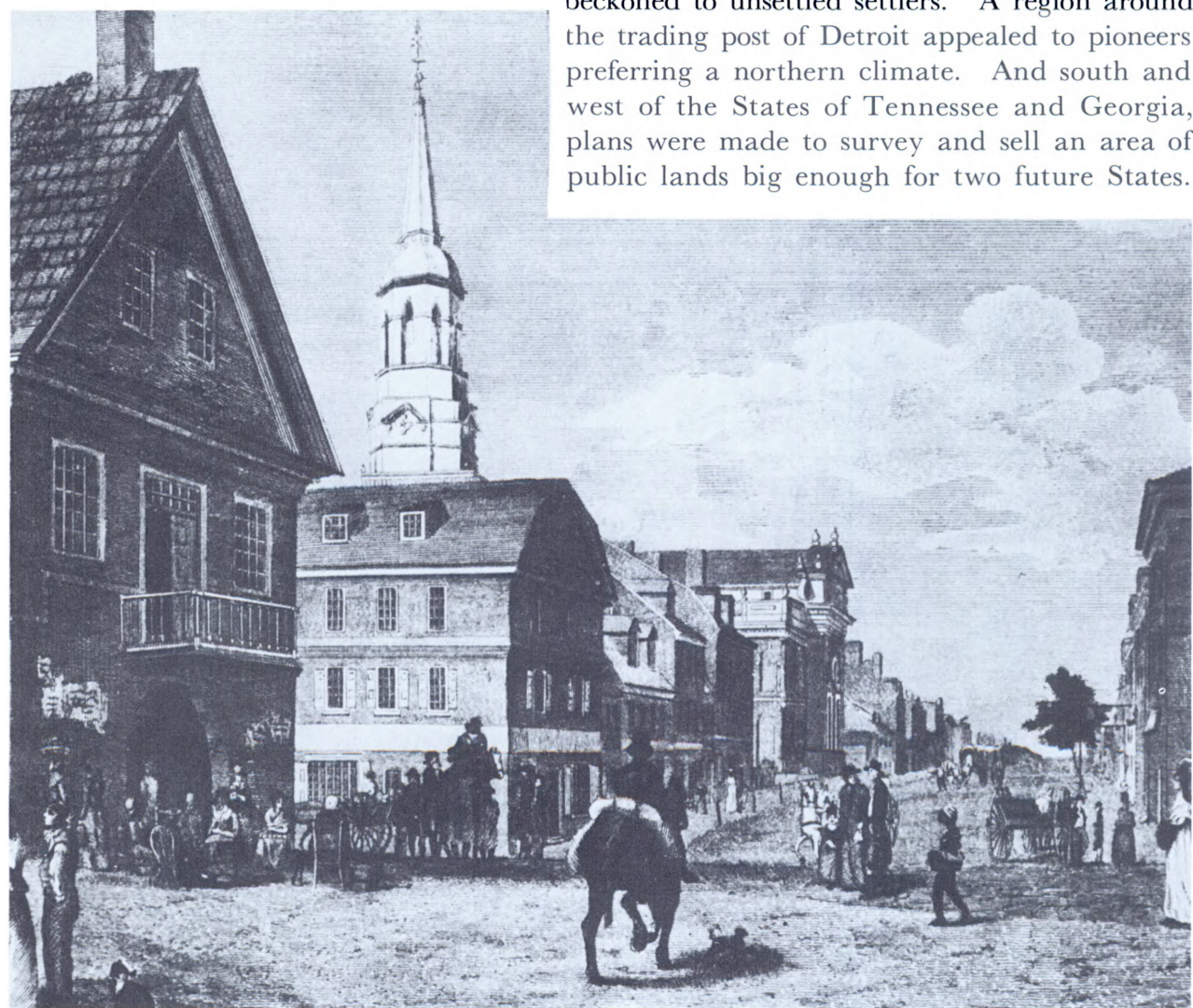
Settling the Northwest Territory

Moving through and around the territory north of the Ohio River came the ever-mounting migration of pioneers advancing westward. A few stopped and bought farmsites—with their life savings, or frequently on credit—and settled down. Squatters stopped briefly on lands not their own, then joined the tremendous tide moving toward the West.

With enough residents in 1802, the first public land State, Ohio, was admitted to the Union, and additional land offices were opened by the Treasury Department.

Further west, the new territory of Indiana beckoned to unsettled settlers. A region around the trading post of Detroit appealed to pioneers preferring a northern climate. And south and west of the States of Tennessee and Georgia, plans were made to survey and sell an area of public lands big enough for two future States.

After moving to Philadelphia in 1790, the Treasury Department continued public land sales and maintained all patent records.



TREASURY DEPARTMENT,

January 12th 1802.

In pursuance of the Act, passed the 18th day of February, 1801, entitled, "An Act regulating the grants of Land, appropriated for the Refugees, from the British Provinces of Canada and Nova Scotia," *Martha Walker*.

_____ is entitled to a Patent for Half Section number *Fourteen*. *East* containing *Three Hundred Thirteen Acres, Sixty Four Acres.*

_____ in Township *N. Twelve* Range *Twenty*

One of the Lands set apart and reserved, for the purpose of satisfying the claims of Persons entitled to Lands under the Act entitled, "An Act for the relief of the Refugees, from the British Provinces of Canada and Nova Scotia."

Albert Gallatin
Secretary of the Treasury.

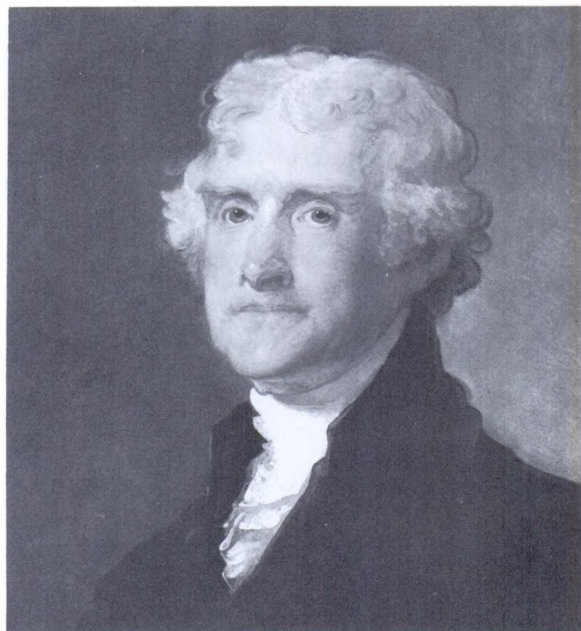
E. B.
Counter signed,

Mark Rouse Register.

To the Secretary of State.

After the Revolutionary War, Congress granted tracts of public lands to refugees from Canada and Nova Scotia.

The Louisiana Purchase, negotiated by Thomas Jefferson, added over 500 million acres to the public domain of the United States.



A time for much confusion

With new and more extensive areas of public lands under its jurisdiction, the Treasury Department faced an increasing workload of land transactions.

Moving from Philadelphia to the new city of Washington, D.C., in 1800, the Department occupied part of a two-story 30-room wooden building facing 15th Street NW. near Pennsylvania Avenue.

Three rooms of the building were used by the entire State Department: the Secretary and seven clerks. The other rooms were used by the Secretary and 69 clerks of the entire Treasury Department. There was no separate group or section devoted to land records or administration. In addition to other work, about six clerks kept land records and issued patents.

For over ten years there was only desultory interest in sales of public lands, and catch-as-catch-can supervision of local land offices in the field.

By 1812, the diversity and increased magnitude of recording and administrative work demanded the creation of a more effective national office as executive guardian of the public lands.

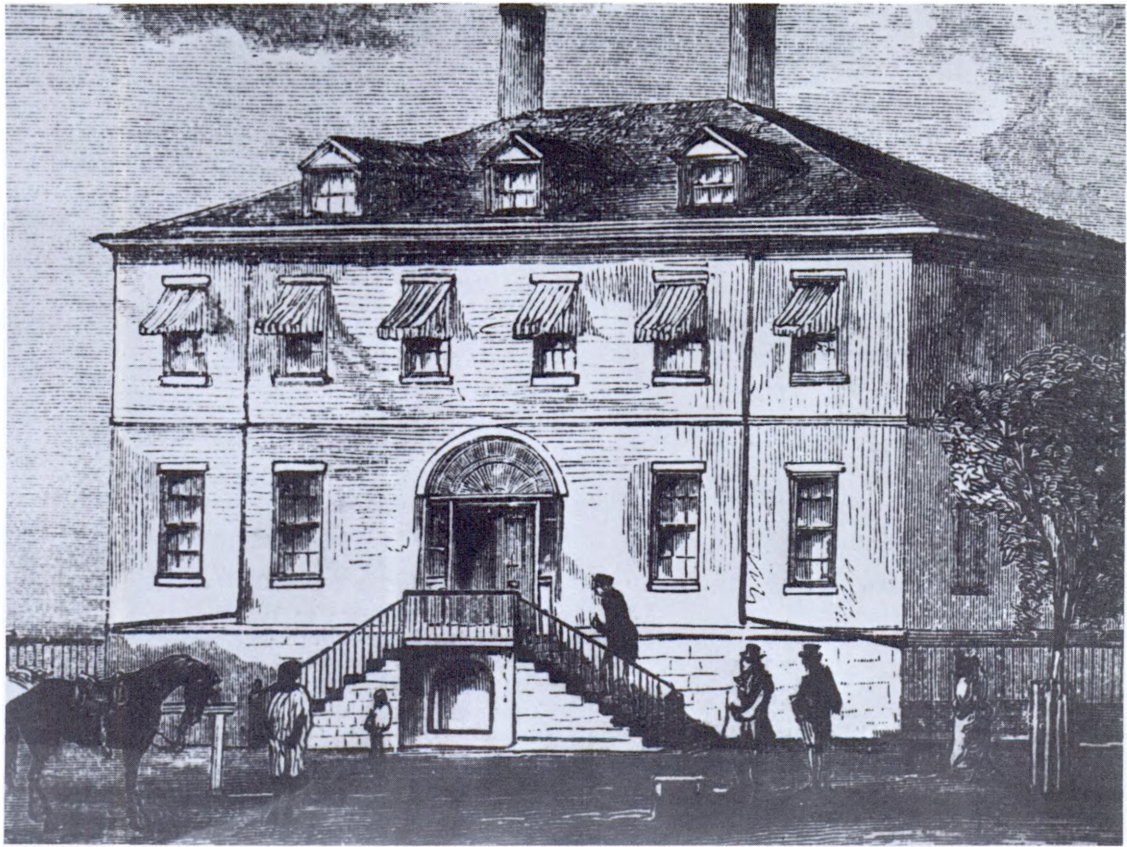
Farmers settling in the lush Ohio Valley needed a market for their produce. Too costly and impractical were overland shipments to the East or to the South. The major marketing route was via the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and their tributaries.

Recognizing that the Mississippi was an arterial highway for future commerce and should never be controlled by France or any other foreign power, Thomas Jefferson, then President of the United States, negotiated with Napoleon for the purchase of all French claims to lands in America.

The deal was completed in 1803—a major political accomplishment for President Jefferson.

For \$15 million—less than four cents an acre—the United States acquired over 500 million acres of western wilderness. Embracing valleys and headwaters of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers beyond existing American territory, the vast region was a major addition to the public domain.

Lands of the Louisiana Purchase



The first General Land Office, created in 1812, occupied three rooms of a two-story wooden building in Washington, D.C.

Genesis of the General Land Office

By Act of Congress on April 25, 1812, the General Land Office was created in Washington, D.C., as a bureau of the Treasury Department. In organization, it was almost identical to that proposed in 1790 by Alexander Hamilton.

A Commissioner was charged with full responsibility for all land records, sales and grants of public lands, and supervision of local land offices. He was authorized to prepare and issue land patents, which were personally signed by the President.

First to be designated Commissioner was Edward Tiffin, an Ohio statesman and first Governor of that State. His salary: \$2,250 per year—plus mail franking privileges. His allowance for clerk hire—as much as he needed, but not to exceed \$7,000 per year.

First Organized system of land management

Upon taking office, Tiffin began planning and developing a more effective system of land management—in accordance with existing laws of Congress.

Records, surveys, maps, and reports about the public lands were scattered variously through files of all branches of the Government—particularly the State and War Departments. These data were collected, collated, and cataloged.

Tiffin then instituted new and improved procedures for his embryonic staff of ten clerks. Under his training, they soon became adept at handling the several types of land transactions that frequently threatened to engulf the General Land Office.

Appropriate procedures and methods were then provided for each district land office in the field. These offices were kept fully informed of new or changed public land laws as well as rules and regulations of the General Land Office. Full coordination between the district land offices and the General Land Office was essential to success of the new system of land management.



The first Commissioner of the new General Land Office, Edward Tiffin, developed a workable system of public land management.

Land sales at district land offices

As soon as new areas of public lands were acquired by the Government, the lands were surveyed under an appropriate Surveyor General. Completed plats of survey were sent to the nearest district land office, where tracts were sold in accordance with prevailing public land laws. Records of all land transactions at every district land office ultimately reached the archives of the General Land Office.

During 1812 and 1813 when the new system of land management was introduced, there were 16 district land offices—in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana—with a total of about 65 employees.

A full century later, there were over 120 land offices throughout the Nation, with a total of more than 1,400 employees.

**British revenge
and
burned records**

Some proofs of accomplishment

In December of 1813, Commissioner Tiffin submitted to the 13th Congress his first comprehensive report of accomplishments since establishment of the General Land Office and founding of the first system of Federal land management.

His report featured an elaborate exhibit, which showed for the first time quantities and locations of major areas of public lands, heavy stands of timber, known mineral deposits, military land-bounty districts, and other graphic data about the public lands. The exhibit was compiled with the help of several Surveyors General, chiefly Josiah Meigs of Ohio.

And Tiffin's full report on the new Federal land management system was favorably received by Congress.

The second Commissioner of the General Land Office, long-time surveyor Josiah Meigs, traded positions with former Commissioner, Edward Tiffin.



Near the close of the War of 1812, British troops invaded Washington, and set fire to a number of Government buildings in late August 1814. One of these was the two-story wooden structure at 15th Street NW. and Pennsylvania Avenue that housed the State and Treasury Departments.

In the conflagration, the building was destroyed and all records of the General Land Office were reduced to ashes.

Although plans for reconstruction were soon approved, it was two years until a similar two-story wooden structure was built on the same site.

In the interim, the General Land Office occupied private homes, which were rented by the Government in the downtown area of Washington. Nearly a year was consumed in reconstructing procedural details of the management system and catching up on the increasing backlog of land transactions.

Great were the hazards of fire in wooden buildings of this early era, yet the replacement structure was almost identical to the first building destroyed.

Command shift in land management

Liking the work but tiring of the pace, Tiffin yearned to return to his home State. In 1815, he arranged to exchange positions with Josiah Meigs, Surveyor General of Ohio, who agreeably came to Washington.

Long interested in surveying, Tiffin continued in this work as Surveyor General of Ohio for more than 15 years. During this time, he perfected a number of surveying procedures, which were adopted and used by various other Surveyors General concerned with mapping and marking public lands in accordance with the established rectangular system of surveys.

Josiah Meigs became the second Commissioner of the General Land Office, and held the appointive position for eight years. Continuing with a staff of only ten employees, he improved clerical procedures and expanded facilities of the Office to better handle the several types of land transactions. An advocate of meteorology, Meigs added weather reporting to field functions of the district land offices in 1817.

No. 4.

LAND OFFICE, at Tallahassee,

16th May. 1825.

IT IS HEREBY CERTIFIED, That, in pursuance of Law, Charles
Williamson, of Georgia — on this day purchased of the
at Tallahassee the lot or West half of the
Two of township
South & West,
May 25

Reg

No. 2

in

c

LAND OFFICE, at Kaskaskia,
Ill

IT IS HEREBY CERTIFIED, That, in pursuance of Law
of Randolph County —
Register of this Office at Kaskaskia
West quarter — of sec.
number 5 South —
containing 73 ⁷/₁₀₀
per acre, amounting
has made

820

2

e

LAND OFFICE, Chillicothe
May 3^d 1820.

No. 3

IT IS HEREBY CERTIFIED, That, in pursuance of Law,
Henry Hosteller of Hocking County — on this day purchased of the
Register of this Office at Chillicothe — the lot or East Half of the
Northeast quarter — of section number 3 — of township
number 13 — in range number 17 —
containing 82 ⁷/₁₀₀ — acres, at the rate of 1 Dollar 25 cents
per acre, amounting to \$ 103 ⁴¹/₁₀₀ — for which the said Henry Hosteller
has made payment in full as required by law:

NOW THEREFORE BE IT KNOWN, That, on presentation of this certificate to the
Commissioner of the General Land Office, the said Henry Hosteller —
shall be entitled to receive a patent for the lot above described.

Jesse Spencer Register.

Acquisition from England and Spain

In defining the territory acquired by the Louisiana Purchase, a triangular wedge of lands below the Canadian border was excluded by error. These lands embraced the Red River basin. The error was corrected in 1818 by a treaty with England, which added nearly 30 million acres to the public domain.

A year later, negotiations were concluded with Spain for holdings near the United States. Although Florida had been settled originally by Spain in the Sixteenth Century, colonization had never been a rousing success. And for over \$6 million, Spain willingly ceded Florida and lands in western Louisiana—adding over 46 million acres to the public domain. This was the first time that the western boundary of Louisiana had been defined.

The continuing migration to elsewhere

Throughout the early decades of the Nineteenth Century, a continuing mass of migrating pioneers moved glacier-like into every newly acquired area of public lands—often before the lands were ready for sale.

By 1820, there were some settlers in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and even Florida in the South. A few others preferred the territories of Michigan or north of Illinois. But by far the greatest number of pioneers and settlers moved westward—across the Mississippi and up the Missouri Rivers. On the plains and prairies, ancient Indian trails gradually turned to dusty, rutted roads under the grinding wheels of covered wagons.

Squatters and indigent settlers

More adventurous pioneers frequently settled far ahead of Government surveyors. They simply became squatters until their chosen lands were surveyed and recorded, and then asserted their rights of pre-emption by filing claims at the nearest land office.

There was a subtle change in the attitude of the Government toward settlers on the public lands. Beginning in 1820, the Government became more concerned about encouraging new settlements than in acquiring revenue from sales of public lands. And for the first time, lands were surveyed and sold in quarter-sections—catering to settlers of limited means.

Also in 1820, the credit system was abolished. And thereafter, all land sales were for cash. This simplified book-keeping at the General Land Office, and eliminated antagonism between the Government and settlers who defaulted on their payments for lands.

Land promoters and speculators

This period of settlement was characterized by some distinct breeds of Americans: the transient pioneers, the more-serious settlers, the less-serious squatters, and men of commerce—such as blacksmiths, merchants, saloon keepers, and land speculators.

Land agents or speculators preyed alike on all who sought lands and had a little money. After buying large tracts of choice property at a land office, they stimulated demand by a variety of ruses, and then reaped outrageous profits. As dealers in real estate, they employed every persuasive gimmick and quasi-legal trick to pressure sales. Failing this, they were not above fraud, deceit, or duplicity.

Only mindful of the “fast buck,” land agents and speculators instinctively appeared amid any sudden boom of settlement activity. Although repudiated and renounced by the Government, their base of nefarious operations was frequently a district land office.

Politics and land business

In 1822, there were 38 district land offices—throughout Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

Sometimes a land office was too distant—or so complained the settlers. In those times of poor transportation, a trip of only 50 miles was an all-day affair, and a rugged hardship. But once there, it was worth the trip.

In addition to official functions, most land offices were political and social centers of the districts.

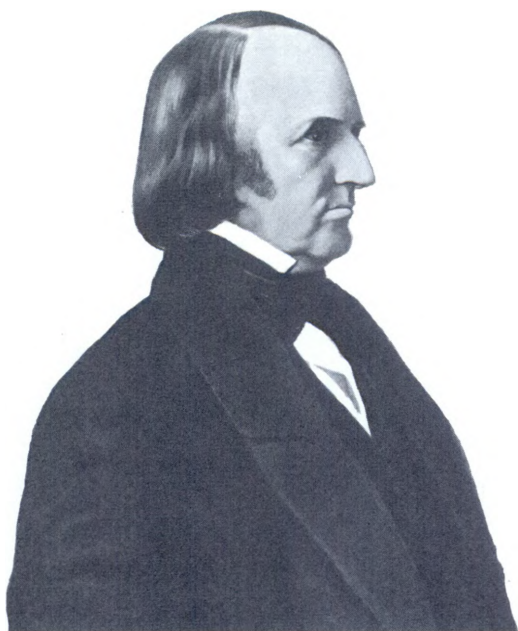
They were invariably staffed according to the political affiliations of local employees, just as most of the surveying contracts were strongly tinged with political patronage.

Still another conflagration

In Washington, working conditions were somewhat more pristine in the General Land Office. And at times more exciting.

In March of 1833, fire again destroyed the two-story wooden building on 15th Street NW., that housed both the State and Treasury Departments. This time, however, all records of the General Land Office were rescued and carried to the safety of nearby private homes. There was talk of arson, some arrests, and trials with hung juries. But little resulted of a conclusive nature.

Then, for more than six years, the General Land Office was installed in a row of five private houses on the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue NW., between 14th and 15th Streets. During this temporary occupation, a new and fireproof building was planned for exclusive use of the Treasury Department.



Ethan Allen Brown, Commissioner during 1835-36, convinced Congress of a need for expanding the work of the G.L.O.

Reorganization for expanded work

New public land laws had produced a decided increase in both quantity and kind of land transactions—plus a welter of complaints and appeals from decisions of the General Land Office. There was a need for expanded and improved administration of the public lands.

As a collective solution, Congress in 1836 authorized the enlargement and reorganization of the national land office in Washington.

Surveying became a management responsibility of the General Land Office, with surveys still performed under private contracts. The new organization included divisions for: private land claims, public land claims, surveys, records, and claims adjudication. And additional personnel were employed—including a number of clerks, a solicitor for judicial functions, and a secretary to sign the President's name on every issued patent.

Precedent of the Jackson Veto

During this period, Congress long debated but finally passed a bill giving each State all proceeds from the sale of public lands within such States. This was the fruition of vociferous advocates of States' rights. But their efforts came to nothing, because President Jackson vetoed the bill with a determined flourish.

Not only appreciating the assorted plights of the pioneers and settlers, Andrew Jackson well understood the need for continuing and improving the existing system of Federal land management under the General Land Office.

His veto marked a milestone in the history of the public domain. As events later proved, it established title ownership by the Government to all public lands, it assured the National Treasury of a continuing income from land sales, and it was an effective weapon against arguments favoring State claims to the public domain.

And somewhere on this figurative milestone is engraved: Courtesy of Andrew Jackson, President of the United States.

Keeping pace with the pioneers

Despite an expanded staff, the General Land Office was hard pressed to keep up with the increasing land transactions generated indirectly by the pioneers and settlers in their mass migration westward.

Beyond the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, they had pushed the western frontier well into Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas—often hundreds of miles ahead of surveyors of the public lands. Late in 1836, there were more than 10,000 squatters in Iowa, with no genuine ownership of landed property.

In 1838, when the first two district land offices were opened in Iowa, the territorial population exceeded 25,000 eager settlers—most of them “residents” for several years.

In that year, there was a total of 68 district land offices supporting the General Land Office in Washington.

Below: A receipt for a land sale in the Oregon Territory typifies the principal method of transferring ownership of public lands in the West. Oregon City was the first land office in the western territory.

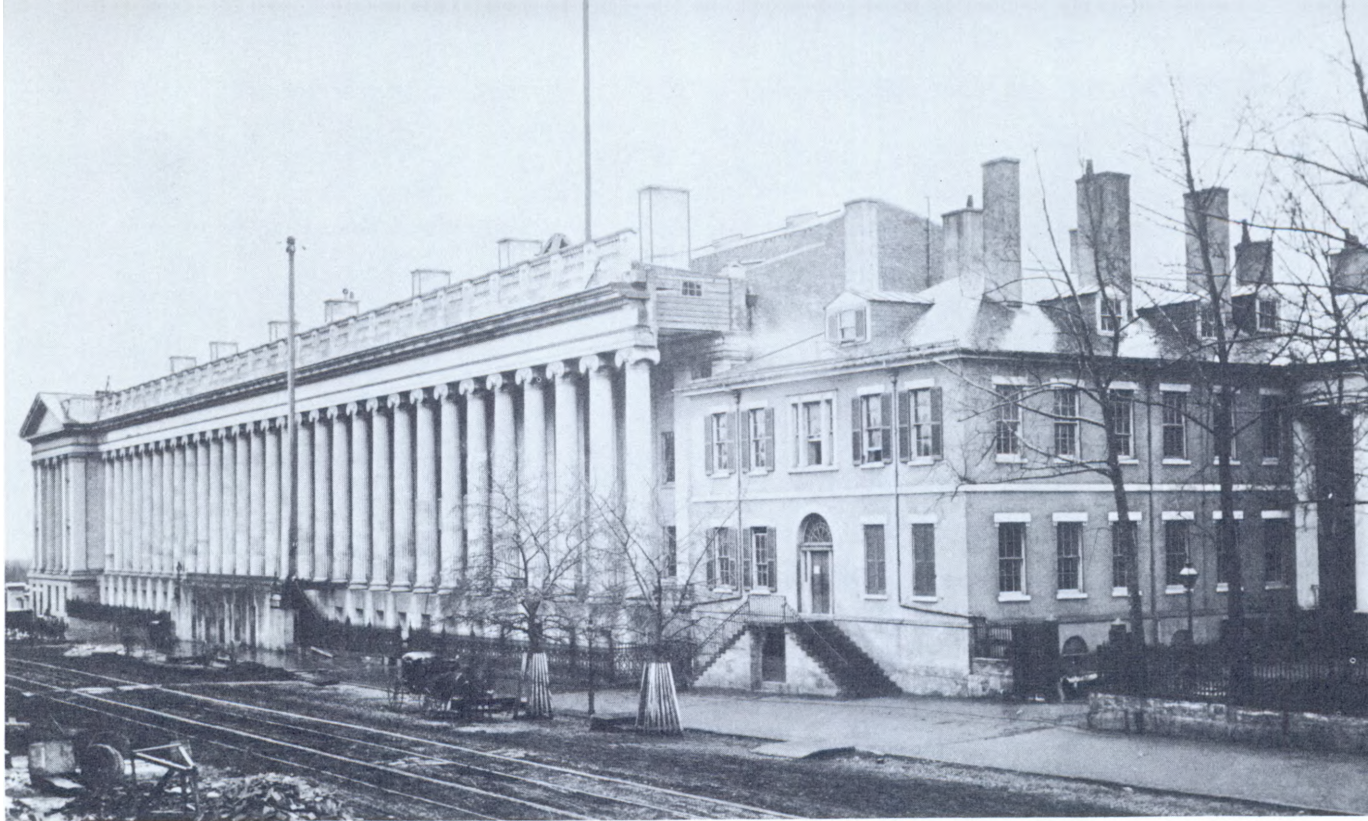
No. 4 LAND OFFICE at *Oregon City - Oregon July 1* - 1857

IT IS HEREBY CERTIFIED, That, in pursuance of Law,

Robert Ogden of *Clackamas* County, State of *Oregon Territory* on this day purchased of the Register of this Office, the Lot or *River fractions 5 of Section ten and River Lot N^o 4* of Section No. *Eleven* in Township No. *Three South* of Range No. *One East* containing *fifty one*²⁹/₁₀₀ acres, at the rate of *One* dollar and *sixty five* cents per acre, amounting to *fifty one* dollars and *thirty three*³/₄ cents, for which the said *Robert Ogden* has made payment in full as required by law.

Now therefore be it known, That on presentation of this certificate to the COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE, The said *Robert Ogden* shall be entitled to receive a Patent for the lot above described.

Amiley Register.



First permanent building for the General Land Office was the imposing Treasury Building, 1839.

Into the new Treasury building

To provide a permanent building for exclusive use of the entire Treasury Department, an imposing edifice was constructed on Pennsylvania Avenue NW. near 15th Street in Washington. Of pure Grecian design, the sandstone structure contained 150 rooms. And of major importance, the large building was fireproof.

In 1839, the General Land Office moved into an upper story of the west wing. For the first time, there was sufficient room for the considerable volume of files and land records. At long last, a suitable home was found for the General Land Office.

But continued growth of the Treasury Department during the following decades required south and then north extensions of the building, when it became the magnificent structure that exists today.

James Whitcomb was the first Commissioner after the General Land Office moved to the new building.





Land grants and land claims

During the 1830's and 1840's, Congress authorized many special grants of public lands for a variety of uses. It was a period when special land legislation was much in vogue.

Grants were made to schools, seminaries, deaf-mute asylums, and a variety of charitable institutions. And land grants were issued for constructing wagon roads, digging canals, reclaiming swamps, and building levees. All such grants were dutifully recorded and administered by the General Land Office.

By 1843, however, increasing judicial duties retarded the routine handling of land sales, grants, and other transactions. In this year, Commissioner Thomas Blake complained about the volume of private land claims under previous French, Spanish, and Mexican grants that required adjudication. And implementing the land-transfer clauses of treaties with various Indian tribes further slowed operations of the General Land Office.

Above:

Military bounty land warrant for 120 acres of public lands issued to Captain Abraham Lincoln for service during Black Hawk Wars.

Above right:

Thomas Ewing, first Secretary of the Interior, appointed in 1849 after establishment of the new cabinet-level Department of the Interior.

Right:

Justin Butterfield, first Commissioner of the General Land Office after its transfer to the newly created Department of the Interior.

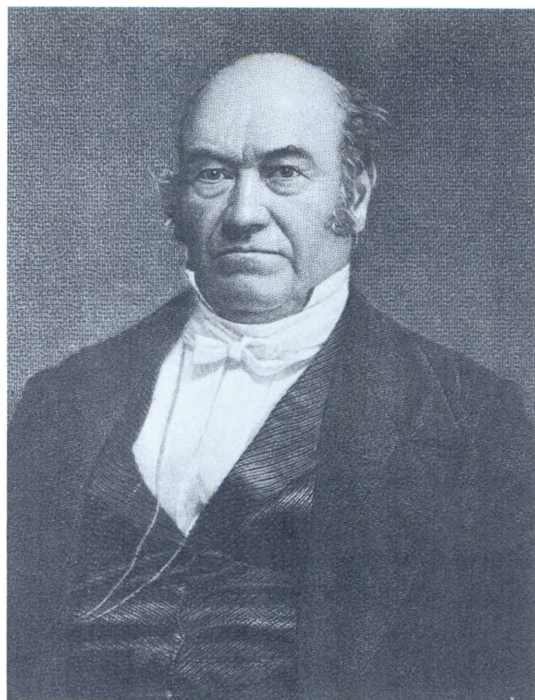
The office with a new Department

In 1849, Congress created the Department of the Interior, a new executive or cabinet-level department concerned with domestic needs and internal affairs of the Nation. First to be appointed Secretary of the Interior was Thomas Ewing, an Ohio statesman.

At the same time, the General Land Office was designated a bureau of the new Department of the Interior. Although transferred organizationally, there was no physical move of the General Land Office—which continued to occupy an upper story of the Treasury Building for another six years.

As in the past, a Commissioner remained responsible for all surveys, sales, grants, and other disposition of public lands—including records maintenance and claims adjudication.

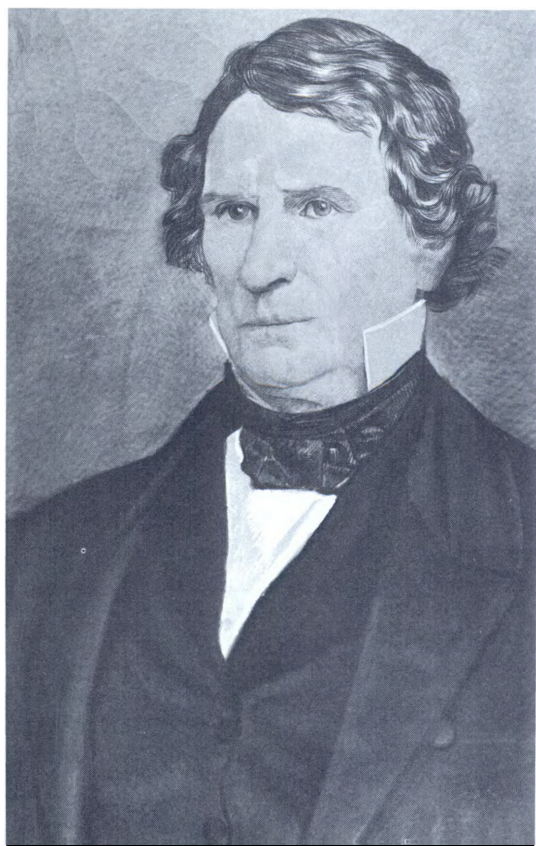
Under the new Department of the Interior, the first Commissioner was Justin Butterfield.



Office operations as usual

The General Land Office continued to operate as in the past, with no major change in organization, responsibilities, or functions. Under the existing system of Federal land management, the General Land Office provided all direction, guidance, and control of field operations; processed entries, applications, and other land transactions; and maintained survey, patent, and other land records. Adjudication of private land claims and other land disputes were also handled by the office in Washington.

In the field, district land offices remained the primary medium of public contact for the great majority of land transactions—including entries, applications, sales, records, and delivery of land patents to new owners. In 1849, there were 71 district land offices located in 13 public land Territories and States.



Public lands to aid agricultural colleges

To encourage the establishment of vocational colleges for higher training in agriculture and mechanic arts, Commissioner Butterfield in 1849 was the first to propose publicly the use of public lands to aid and support such institutions.

In his first report to Congress, he suggested that part of the proceeds from public land sales be set apart to endow selected colleges and universities teaching agricultural and other vocational subjects.

Although lacking details, his proposed system was basically the same as the system publicly advocated a year or so later by leading educators, and ultimately contained over a decade later in the Morrill or Land Grant Act of 1862.

Joseph S. Wilson, only Commissioner appointed for two separate terms—before and after the Civil War.



Seeking title to the entire Pacific Northwest on the basis of previous exploration and occupancy by pioneers and settlers, the United States entered into negotiations with England in 1846. Through mediation, the extensive region was annexed to the United States—adding over 183 million acres to the public domain.

As a provision of the peace treaty following the Mexican War, that country ceded to the United States the vast Pacific Southwest of nearly 1 million acres.

Firmly establishing the northern boundary of Texas, nearly 79 million acres of State lands were purchased in 1850 from Texas. These lands became part of the public domain.

And three years later, almost 19 million acres were acquired from Mexico in the Gadsden purchase—the last acquisition of lands in the continental area of the United States. This region in southern Arizona and New Mexico was valuable at that time because it was believed to be the most feasible route for a transcontinental railroad to the Pacific Coast.



Protection and conservation of Federal timberlands

Under cognizance of the General Land Office, the first Federal timber agents were assigned in 1850 to critical regions of the West in order to safeguard forests on public lands from trespass, illegal cutting, and other depredations.

Five years later, the protection of timber on public lands became an additional administrative responsibility of all registers and receivers at district land offices.

This was an early indication of official concern for forest resources by the Department of the Interior and the General Land Office. The care, conservation, and protection of all resources soon became permanent elements of the Federal system of land and resource management.

More acquisitions of public lands

Above:
Early logging operations in the Northwest were rugged work.

Right:
William Hendricks, only Commissioner of the General Land Office ever to become Vice President of the United States.



The earliest Federal grants to promote railroads were made by Congress in 1850. Over two million acres were granted to the Illinois Central and over one million acres to the Mobile & Ohio Railroad—to finance the construction of a new system between Chicago and cities in Alabama and Mississippi. Promoters of the Illinois Central sold lands to speculators and settlers—producing over \$30 million, or nearly 90 percent of the cost of the railroad.

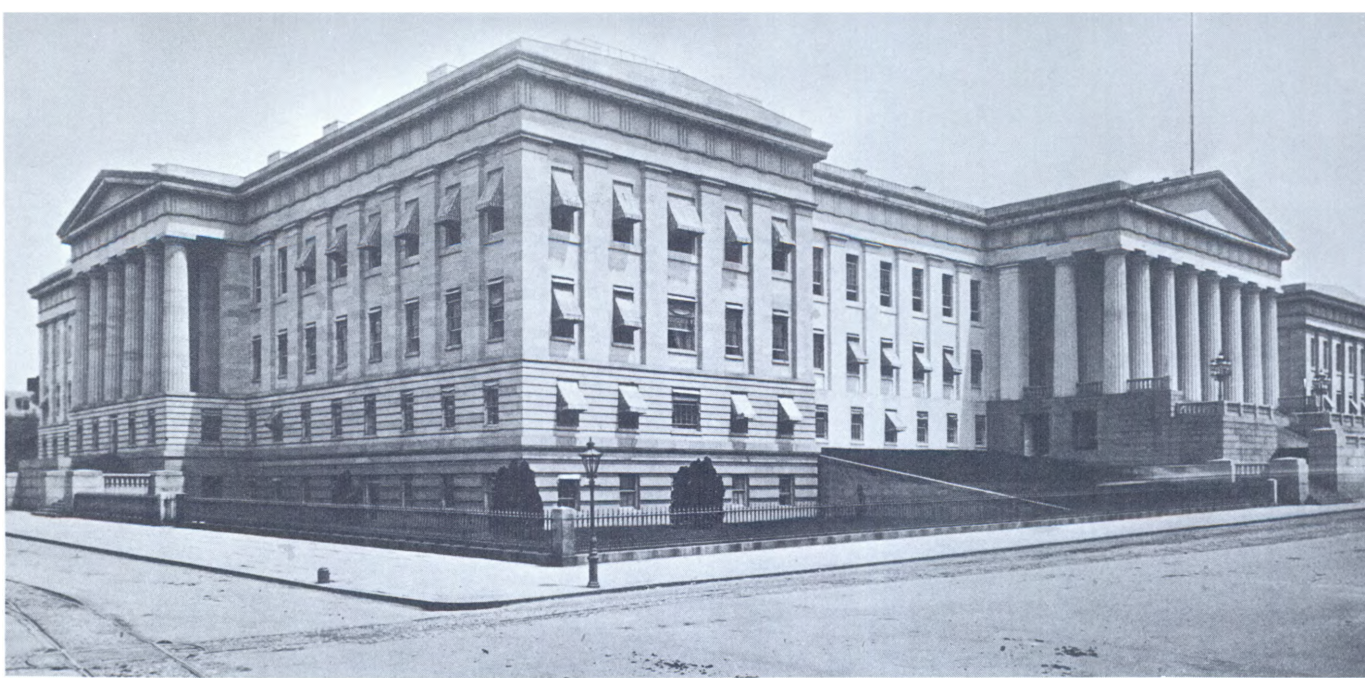
This set the pattern for later and more extensive land grants for promoting railroads throughout the Nation. Largest of these was the grant of more than 20 million acres to the Northern Pacific to promote construction of the first transcontinental railroad from the Missouri River to the Pacific Coast.

During a period of about two decades, land grants were authorized by Congress to promote the construction of more than 70 railroad systems, mostly in the western United States. These land grants represented a total of nearly 95 million acres of public lands. And all of these grants were administered by the General Land Office in Washington.

Land grants for constructing railroads

Construction of American railroads between 1850 and 1890 was aided directly by grants of public lands. Many of the same railroads later aided in further settlement and development of the nation's westward frontier.





The location of the General Land Office in the new Patent Office Building—from 1855 to 1900—was its first physical association with the executive headquarters of the Department of the Interior.

Move to the new Patent Office Building

Although a bureau of the Department of the Interior for over six years, the General Land Office continued to occupy an upper story of the Treasury Building—despite pleas and protests by a succession of Commissioners for offices and facilities elsewhere in Washington.

In 1855, a new fireproof building was completed for the Patent Office of the Department of the Interior. It was a marble structure, located between F and G streets, and 7th and 9th Streets, NW. And during that year and 1856, the entire General Land Office was transplanted to fairly spacious quarters in the Patent Office Building.

This was the first physical association with its parent: the Department of the Interior. And the General Land Office remained at this location until 1900. The structure is now popularly known as the “Old Patent Office Building.”



District land offices across the Nation not only were focal points of public land transactions, but also community social and political centers.

Right: One of the first homesteads in the United States was a 160-acre tract near Beatrice, Nebraska, which later became the Homestead National Monument.

**Plenty of room
but
not enough personnel**

A chronic complaint of all Commissioners during the 1840's and 1850's was the need for more clerical and processing personnel to handle routine transactions. And even in new and enlarged quarters, the need for additional help was acute. In 1856, Commissioner Hendricks reported to Congress that work of the General Land Office was about four years in arrears.

After acquiring some additional personnel, further workload complications materialized. Requiring attention was a profusion of private land claims. And proper adjudication of most of the claims required a knowledge of Spanish, and a preponderance of patience. Legal and processing personnel of the General Land Office were short of both. Commissioner Wilson regretfully reported in 1859 an increasing bulk of unfinished business, much of it five years old. And there was no diminution of new land transactions.

Throughout the 1840's and 1850's, the great moving mass of migrating settlers infiltrated most of the surveyed public lands, with many continuing to press westward. Those with a little money bought farm-lands at a district land office, or from a land agent or speculator. Some became squatters for awhile, until they exerted their pre-emptive rights and bought the lands they had cultivated. Those with insufficient money, always the majority, kept moving toward the West—guided only by blind

Tracts of 160 acres for new homesteads

destiny, living from day to day on hope and a fistful of beef.

But in 1862, the entire pattern of settlement was changed and recast by a significant Act of Congress.

The Homestead Act awarded a tract of 160 acres of public lands—at practically no cost whatever—to every settler who farmed and lived on the tract for at least five years. This Congressional gift to tillers of the soil produced a continuing flood of entries or applications for homestead tracts—causing further delays at the overloaded and understaffed General Land Office.



HOMESTEAD.

Land Office at

Bronville Neb
January 20th 1868.

CERTIFICATE, }
No. 1

{ APPLICATION,
No. 1

It is hereby certified, That pursuant to the provisions of the act of Congress, approved May 20, 1862, entitled "An act to secure homesteads to actual settlers on the public domain,"

Daniel Kruman has
made payment in full for *SW 1/4 of NW 1/4 of NW 1/4 of SW 1/4 of T8N R14E* of
Section *Twelve (26)* in Township *fourth N*
of Range *five (5) E* containing *160* acres.

Now, therefore, be it known, That on presentation of this Certificate to the COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE, the said *Daniel Kruman* shall be entitled to a Patent for the Tract of Land above described.

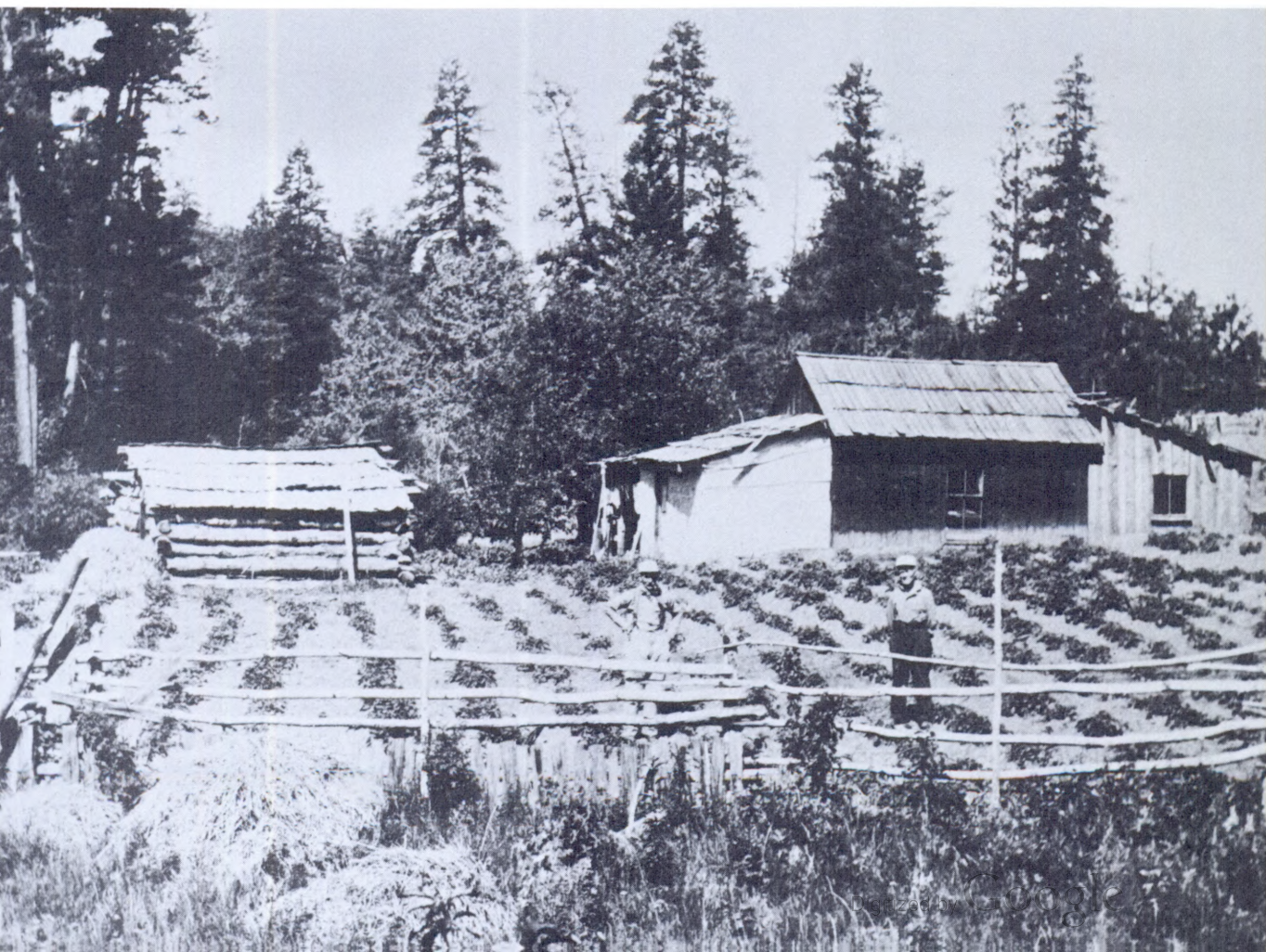
Henry M. Atkinson Register.

Larger tracts for western homesteads

After almost exhausting the fertile prairies around the Mississippi and Missouri valleys, the great migration continued westward—eventually reaching the incredible expanse of semi-arid public lands. There, after the turn of the Century, a settler could claim as much as 320 acres for a homestead—but farming was difficult. Over a decade later, Congress authorized a homestead of 640 acres, where the arid public lands were only fit for raising livestock.

Many other laws were passed to aid homesteading farmers and stockmen. But after the best lands were claimed and occupied, remaining lands would seldom support a homestead for either farming or stockraising. The economic law of diminishing returns foretold the certain doom of homesteading.

As settlers continued to migrate westward, thousands of new homesteads flourished in Washington—and in most other western areas.





An early final certificate for a homestead issued by a district land office in Kansas.

HOMESTEAD.
Land Office at *Topeka Kansas*
January 2 1868.
APPLICATION, No. 3
under the provisions of the act of Congress, approved April 20, 1862, entitled "An act to secure homesteads to actual settlers on the public domain."

CERTIFICATE,
No. 1 }
It is hereby certified, That pursuant to the provisions of the act of Congress, approved May 20, 1862, entitled "An act to secure homesteads to actual settlers on the public domain," *William Tucker* of *Washington County Oregon* has made payment in full for *Lots Nos. 1, 2 and 3 of Sec. 15 and Lot 2 of* Section *14* of Range *1 West* containing *120* acres. Now, therefore, be it known, That on presentation of this Certificate to the COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE, the said *William Tucker* shall be entitled to a Patent for the Tract of Land above described.
Owen Wade
Register.

The first final certificate for a homestead issued by a district land office in Oregon.

24/60 Land Office at *Prescott Arizona*
Aug 23, 1880.
Joseph Melvin

It is hereby Certified that, in pursuance of law,
Yavapai County, State of *Arizona*, on this day purchased of the
 Register of this Office, the lot or *North West quarter*
 of Section No. *Sixteen (16)* in Township No.
Thirteen (13) North of Range No. *Five (5) East*, containing
One Hundred & Sixty (160) acres, at the rate of
one dollar and *twenty* cents per acre, amounting to *Two Hundred*
(200) dollars and
Joseph M.

Now, therefore, be it
 OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE

Glen & Salt River

Receipt for sale of 160 acres of public land, issued by the district land office at Prescott, Arizona, in 1880.

Public land granted to railroads was often sold to obtain revenue and to stimulate settlement along railroad.

Kansas Pacific HOMESTEADS



THE Best Place to Get a Farm
 IS ON THE LINE OF THE
KANSAS PACIFIC R'Y

The Lands are Rich. The Prices are very Low. The Time of Credit Long.
 25 per Cent. Discount for Cash. 10 per Cent. for Improvements.

The Climate is very mild. The Winters are short. The Water is pure and good, and the Grasses are exceedingly nutritious. Fortunes are being made in Cattle and Sheep raising.

NO PAYMENT OF PRINCIPAL IS REQUIRED FOR FOUR YEARS
 After the First Installment has been Paid.

A FREE RIDE TO LAND BUYERS.
FIVE MILLION ACRES

To select from, and Five Million Acres more of Government Land open for Homestead and Pre-emption, all lying along the line of this great Railroad.

THE KANSAS PACIFIC HOMESTEAD

Gives a good and reliable account of the country and its progress; the soil, climate, minerals and agricultural products; and also gives good advice as to who should come to Kansas, when they should come, and what they should have, and points out to the poor man the road to prosperity. A copy will be mailed free of cost, by sending address to

GILMORE **JOHN P. DEVEREUX**, Land Commissioner Kansas Pacific Railway,
Lawrence, Kan.

DESERT LAND ACT OF MARCH 3, 1877.

REGISTER'S FINAL CERTIFICATE,
No. 4

DECLARATION,
No. 3

Land Office at Helena Montana
April 24, 1880

It is hereby certified That, in pursuance of the act of Congress approved March 3, 1877, entitled "An Act to provide for the sale of Desert Lands in certain States and Territories," John H. Duncan, of New Lodge County, State or Territory of Montana, has purchased of the Register of this Office, and made payment in full for the land described as follows, to wit:

the S¹/₂ of the N¹/₂, the N¹/₂ of the S¹/₂ of Sec No 20
Range 6 N. R. No 7 N. Mon. Mer.

containing 120.00 acres, at the rate of one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre, amounting to 150.00 dollars.

Now, therefore, be it known That, on presentation of this certificate to the Commissioner of the General Land Office, the said _____ shall be entitled to receive a patent for the tract of land above described.

J. H. Duncan
Register.

[NOTE.—See Original Declaration and Receipt, No. 3 —.]

The rate of failure of entries made under the Desert Land Act of 1877 was high. Many entries were made on land not suitable for farming.

Many western railroads sold their lands to induce settlers to migrate to new regions, and thus be served by the railroad.

READ AND CIRCULATE!

ALL ABOUT

The Great Arkansas Valley in Kansas.

RENO COUNTY STILL AHEAD!

150,000 Acres first-class HOMESTEAD LAND, and How to Get it.

The Place to locate under the Timber Tree Law, and How to do it.

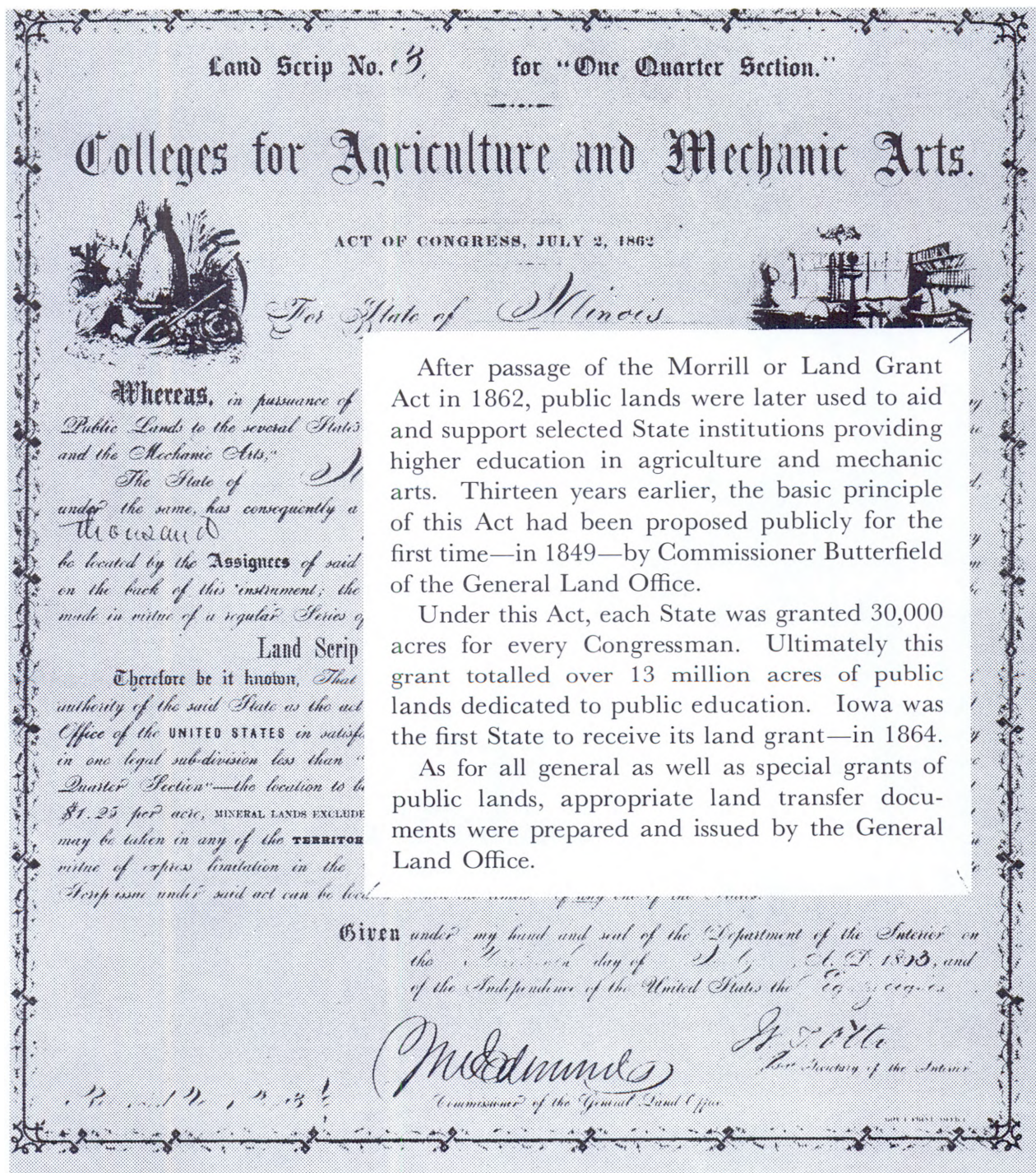
300,000 ACRES ATCHISON, TOPEKA & SANTA FE RAILROAD LANDS at **\$3 to \$7 per Acre**, on 11 years time, at 7 per cent interest. No charge made for showing these Lands to purchasers by C. C. HUTCHINSON, at Hutchinson, County Seat of Reno County, exclusive agent for the *Choicest Lands in the Valley*.

HUTCHINSON has grown in 18 months to contain 1000 people, and is a city of the third class. Not a saloon or gambling house in City or County. C. C. Hutchinson offers for sale 500 beautiful residence lots (one-eighth acre) at **\$15 to \$30 each**, all within fifteen minutes walk of the Court-House. Will sell on time to suit purchasers. I am selling my own lots, and will do better by you than any other person can do. Also 5 and 10 acre out-lots at prices to suit.

The Best opening for a Home in the West. The place to invest your money and double it in one year.

DO YOUR NEIGHBOR GOOD BY SHOWING THIS CIRCULAR.

Land grant colleges and universities



Surveys of public lands continued to be made under private contracts, supervised whenever possible by field agents of the General Land Office. In 1864, many regions of considerable acreage still remained to be surveyed according to the established rectangular system—particularly in the Rocky Mountain region and the desert wastelands of the West. But as fast as townships could be mapped, plats of survey were forwarded to the Washington office for retention.

Collected and filed by the General Land Office were all survey records—such as township plats, maps, surveyors' notes, and other data—needed for identification and location of tracts in all surveyed townships of public lands, as well as private lands which had formerly been public lands.

Also maintained in Washington were complete land records—such as entries, patents, applications, reservations, withdrawals, or other data—affecting use or ownership of any tract of surveyed public lands, or private lands that had once been public lands.



Survey parties of the General Land Office lived off the land, and traveled by foot, horseback, wagon, and canoe in conducting surveys.

Surveying and land records

All geological and geographical surveys of public lands were under the General Land Office until creation of the Geological Survey.



When the extensive value of mineral resources on public lands was realized, all such lands were specially classified, and sold only under rigid control as specified by Congress in the Mining Act of 1872. Control of mineral lands was vested in the General Land Office, and thus mining and minerals became major elements of the existing system of Federal land and resource management.

Under supervision of the General Land Office, the first extensive geological and geographical surveys of potential mineral lands—particularly in the Rocky Mountain region—were initiated under private contracts. These continued for a decade—until creation of the Geological Survey as an office of the Department of the Interior.

Mineral as well as other land transactions increased tremendously after the Civil War, causing further work overloads and extensive backlogs in the Washington office. Delays of four or five years became common for routine handling and administration. Special transactions—particularly adjudication of private land claims previously made under foreign sovereigns—required many additional months, and sometimes several years.

Mining and minerals on public lands

A typical early mining camp in Colorado, symbol of an era of the Old West.



Last major acquisition of public domain

The purchase of the entire territory of Alaska from Russia in 1867 marked the last major addition—375 million acres—to the public domain. It was a fitting climax to the continued expansion of the Nation.

All of these acquisitions—from early State cessions to the Alaska purchase—totalled 1,837,762,560 acres. And these lands were obtained at a cost of slightly more than \$8 million.

Never in history had so much valuable real estate been acquired for so little money—and so little bloodshed.

During 1890, there were 123 district land offices open for business and busy with land transactions throughout the Nation. This was the greatest number of different land offices in operation during any one year. And after 1890, the total number of land offices gradually diminished.

As available public lands in a surveyed region were largely transferred out of Federal ownership, the local land office was consolidated with another office in the same State. When the last land office in a State was closed, all plats and records were returned to Washington, and further sale or other disposition of remaining public lands in the State was made directly by the General Land Office.

In 1920, the total number of such offices had dropped to 95. In 1933, there were 25 offices. And today there are 15 district land offices—chiefly in States of the far West and Alaska.

Peak number of district land offices

There was never a dull day in the early district land offices—"land office business" was hectic.



Move to the Land Office building

Outgrowing the accommodations in the Patent Office Building, the General Land Office in 1900 moved across F Street to quarters in a marble building that had formerly been used by the Post Office Department and by the Washington Post Office.

To provide more storage space for land records, nine years later the General Land Office acquired almost all of the building—and it was promptly renamed: the Land Office Building.

Although the premises were vacated in 1917, the structure is still popularly known as the “Old Land Office Building.”

Work of the General Land Office during the early 20th Century was characterized by declines in agricultural homestead transactions and private land claims requiring adjudication.

A need for land and resource conservation

After the turn of the Twentieth Century, the Nation became aware that its tremendous supplies of natural resources were not inexhaustible. Timber forests had been logged unscientifically. Once-bountiful farms and grazing ranges had been overworked and badly eroded. Through indifference, too many of our valuable resources had been dissipated. And two solutions were better use and conservation.

In the years following, many large and small tracts of public lands were withdrawn and dedicated as National Parks, National Forests, National Monuments, and Wildlife Sanctuaries. And by means of public information and education, the need for developing and conserving natural resources was recognized and understood.

And steadily through ensuing years, this aspect of Federal land and resource management gained greater stature and significance.

The Land Office Building was occupied exclusively by General Land Office personnel from 1909 to 1917.





In 1917 the General Land Office was physically located in the Interior Department Building for the first time.

A centennial of land management

On the 100th Anniversary of the establishment of the General Land Office, the responsibilities of the Office were largely geared to the processing of land transactions based on indiscriminate settlement of the public lands.

Although charged with the enforcement of laws and regulations relating to the public lands, the field service of the General Land Office was much too small to provide even minimal inspection and enforcement of such laws and regulations. Chief concern was the operation of 102 land offices.

In Washington and in the field, a total of 1,419 employees celebrated the Centennial.

Land leases for minerals

The mineral character of the public lands was almost unknown during the early settlement of the Nation. Even though the Government reserved rights to known deposits of minerals, much land of mineral character was transferred out of Federal ownership.

In 1920, however, there was a major redirection in natural resources policy with the introduction of a Federal leasing system of lands containing oil, gas, sulphur, sodium, and potassium. Administration of leases became a responsibility of the General Land Office, and 33 years later was extended to lands of the Outer Continental Shelf.

To contain most of the bureaus and offices of the Department of the Interior under one roof, a new building was constructed prior to World War I. Located between E and F Streets, and 18th and 19th Streets NW., it was called the Interior Department Building.

In 1917, principal elements of the General Land Office moved from the Land Office Building to the west wing of the new marble building. Lesser elements of the General Land Office were collected from makeshift quarters in the Patent Office Building and the Pension Office Building. One characteristic of the General Land Office was its chronic ability to outgrow its accommodations. For once, it seemed to have enough room in the new Interior Department Building.

But such was not to be the case. The General Land Office as well as other components of the Department of the Interior expanded organizationally and increased physically. As a result, across E Street in Washington, a newer, larger, and more modern marble building was constructed for the Department of the Interior. The General Land Office moved to the new building in 1937.

William Spry, Commissioner: 1921–29



Move to first Interior Department building

A rapid decline in land business

Beginning in 1924, the number of land transactions performed by the General Land Office dropped at a rapid rate—particularly for cash sales of public lands, entries and patents for farm homesteads, adjudication of private land claims, and special Congressional grants of land.

Only transactions unaffected were those involving reclamation, grants of swamplands to States, and litigation arising out of earlier railroad land grants.

When Commissioner Spry's request for reduced appropriations was further diminished by Congress, across-the-board retrenchment was widespread. A third of the personnel in Washington was unemployed. An ambitious survey schedule in the West was cut short. The number of district land offices shrank from a total of 84 in 1924 to only 44 in 1925.



A typical field survey party of the early 1920's.

Discovered: 11 million acres of misplaced public lands

The exact amount of remaining public lands during this period was unknown. Tracts and areas of lands were added and subtracted almost daily, and a true balance was elusive.

Small wonder then, that Commissioner Spry—in 1926—accidentally discovered that the Government owned over 11 million acres of public lands it did not know it possessed. This was an area more than twice the size of Massachusetts.

The misplaced “area” proved to be only an error in inventory, however, and failed to affect the status of the “misplaced” public lands.

But the incident did emphasize the antiquity of the many manual processes of the General Land Office, and the need for more modern calculating machines.

Karl S. Landstrom, Director: 1961–present, a career employee of the Bureau of Land Management.





Intensified control and management of livestock grazing on about 175 million acres of public lands was directed in 1934 by the Taylor Grazing Act and accompanying Executive orders.

Large grazing districts were established throughout the West, except Alaska. And these districts were administered by the Grazing Service—a newly created bureau of the Department of the Interior.

Management of public lands within grazing districts meant classification, improvement, conservation, and best use of the rangeland resources. It allowed orderly transfers of land ownership—which were handled by the General Land Office. Unrestricted homesteading in the Western States had come to an end.

Conservation of the public rangelands

Move to the new Interior Department building

Constructed in 1937 for use of the Department of the Interior was a massive marble building, located between C and D Streets, and 18th and 19th Streets NW., in Washington. And in that year, the General Land Office moved to new quarters in the immense structure. The building is still used today by most of the offices and bureaus of the Department of the Interior.

A major reorganization took place within the Department of the Interior in 1946, when the General Land Office and the Grazing Service were combined and renamed: the Bureau of Land Management. Most of the former functions and previous responsibilities were retained by the new organizational identity.

The new Bureau of Land Management continued to process, adjudicate, and record all transactions involving the public lands. And additional grazing administration made for a more comprehensive system of Federal land and resource management.

Successor to the General Land Office

Public lands and resources in the future



In 1962, the Bureau of Land Management is broadly concerned with the survey, engineering, inventory, classification, evaluation, administration, development, improvement, conservation, and multiple use of public lands and natural resources. All of these are now inherent in a single Federal system that embraces:

- * Management of soil resources—including soil protection, conservation, and erosion reduction.

- * Management of water resources—including restoration of underground water levels, and storage by diversion into reservoirs,

- * Management of mineral resources—including mineral land leases, and administration of mining laws.

- * Management of range resources—including watershed protection, range reseeding, land reforestation, and multiple use of public rangelands.

- * Management of forest resources—including sustained yields of harvest, protection, reforestation, conservation, and multiple use of timberlands.

- * Management of recreation resources—including creation and administration of areas for hunting, fishing, camping, and other outdoor pursuits.

This integrated and balanced system of Federal management assures wise and effective use of our public lands and natural resources for the greatest benefit of the most people of the Nation.

Although a fitting climax to 150 years of Federal land and resource management, more challenging problems and more difficult tasks lie beyond the horizon of tomorrow. These problems and tasks are shouldered today by the Bureau of Land Management—on this Sesqui-centennial—as it faces a future of continuing development, conservation, and multiple use of our public lands and natural resources.

Directors

of the Bureau of Land Management
1946–1962

Director	Origin	Appointment
Johnson, Fred W.	Wyoming	16 Jul 1946
Clawson, Marion	Nevada	4 Mar 1948
Woozley, Edward	Idaho	1 May 1953
Landstrom, Karl S.	Oregon	1 Feb 1961

Directors

of the Grazing Service 1938–1946

Director	Origin	Appointment
Carpenter, F.R.	Illinois	1934–1938
Rutledge, R. H.	Idaho	1938–1942
Forsling, Clarence	Nebraska	1942–1946

Commissioners

of the General Land Office 1812-1946

Commissioner	Origin	Appointment
Tiffin, Edward	Ohio	7 May 1812
Meigs, Josiah	Georgia	11 Oct 1814
McLean, John	Ohio	11 Sep 1822
Graham, George	District of Columbia	26 Jun 1823
Hayward, Elijah	Ohio	30 Sep 1830
Brown, Ethan A.	Ohio	24 Jul 1835
Whitcomb, James	Indiana	21 Oct 1836
Huntington, Elisha M.	Indiana	3 Jul 1841
Blake, Thomas H.	Indiana	19 May 1842
Shields, James	Illinois	16 Apr 1845
Young, Richard M.	Illinois	6 Jan 1847
Butterfield, Justin	Illinois	1 Jul 1849
Wilson, John	District of Columbia	16 Sep 1852
Hendricks, Thomas A.	Indiana	8 Aug 1855
Smith, Samuel A.	Tennessee	13 Oct 1859
Wilson, Joseph S.	District of Columbia	23 Feb 1860
Edmunds, James M.	Michigan	19 Mar 1861
Wilson, Joseph S.	District of Columbia	1 Sep 1866
Drummond, Willis	Iowa	4 Feb 1871
Burdett, Samuel S.	Missouri	1 Jul 1874
Williamson, James A.	Iowa	24 Jun 1876
McFarland, Noah C.	Kansas	17 Jun 1881
Sparks, William A. J.	Illinois	26 Mar 1885
Stockslager, Strother M.	Indiana	27 Mar 1888
Groff, Lewis A.	Nebraska	16 Sep 1889
Carter, Thomas H.	Montana	30 Mar 1891
Stone, William M.	Iowa	18 Nov 1892
Lamoreaux, Silas W.	Wisconsin	28 Mar 1893
Hermann, Binger	Oregon	25 Mar 1897
Richards, William A.	Wyoming	26 Jan 1903
Ballinger, Richard A.	Washington	28 Jan 1907
Dennett, Fred	North Dakota	14 Jan 1908
Tallman, Clay	Nevada	5 Jun 1913
Spry, William	Utah	22 Mar 1921
Moore, Charles C.	Idaho	9 May 1929
Johnson, Fred W.	Wyoming	20 May 1933

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Created in 1849, the Department of the Interior—America's Department of Natural Resources—is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water, wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and Territorial affairs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved for the future, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.



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